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Sarma, S.L.P Anjaneya / Grimal, François. *Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita on the Gajasūtra*. (Regards sur l'Asie du Sud / South Asian Perspectives; 1. Vyākhyānamālā; 1). Puducherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2013, pp. iii + 136, ISBN 978-81-8470-196-8.

This is the first publication to appear in a new series edited by the French Institute of Pondicherry. As the name itself suggests, the series is devoted to the commentarial genre, a genre that deeply shaped Indian intellectual and cultural history. The present volume is thus a kind of *manifesto* to be analysed not only for its specific contents but also against the background of the wider intellectual project it proposes.

The series wishes to offer a range of annotated translations of commentaries, broadly defined as texts showing “a deep engagement with a problematic text or concept”, and is open to commentaries coming from different domains, both technical and more literary ones. Precedence will be given to texts that have not been translated yet. Moreover, there are some strict indications when it comes to the form and organization of material. Each volume will comprise an introduction, the Sanskrit text, the translation and endnotes. The introduction is meant to present a summary of the flow of arguments, together with a brief explanation of the principal terms and concepts involved in the discussion.

These guidelines already allow some important features of this project to clearly emerge. Commentarial tradition is not interpreted, in this frame, as a tool to access other texts or documents but as an intellectual product to be analysed and understood in its own right. Such an attitude is accompanied by a commendable concern for the actual accessibility of the data presented: as every Indologist perfectly knows, these texts were originally meant for readers who shared a wide background of debate topics, technical conventions and problem-solving routines, and they are characterised by a high degree of implicit information. This is even more the case in age-old commentarial traditions where later texts try to make sense of long lasting debates. In such fields, collaboration with scholars who still preserve these living traditions proves crucial. This series thus presents a unique mix of academic research and preservation concerns, which also characterizes other important productions from the Pondicherry School. In the writer's opinion, such a program could be

just as crucial as text editing for future indological research, in particular if we take into account the specificities of India's cultural *milieu* and its peculiar ways of transmitting and creating knowledge.

These general principles manifest themselves in the first issue of this series which we owe to Anjaneya Sharma and François Grimal, who is also the curator of the series. It is a small book dedicated to the interpretation of a single Pāṇinian rule (A 1 3 67 *ṇer aṇau yat karma ṇau cet sa kartānādhyāne*) by Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita, the great seventeenth century grammarian, active in Benares. The title itself is quite representative of the authors' attitude towards tradition and its study: *gajasūtra* or "the *sūtra* of the elephant" is a traditional name by which the *sūtra* is identified in modern śāstric teaching and debates. The name hints at a group of sentences – involving elephants and their keepers – commonly used as examples for the rule at stake. The rule under scrutiny teaches the usage of middle endings in causative verbal forms under some specific syntactic and semantic conditions. Three different texts are taken into account, namely the *Siddhāntakaumudī* (a rearrangement of Pāṇini's grammar acting *de facto* as its commentary) with its direct commentary the *Prauḍhamanoramā* and a commentary on Pāṇini, the *Śabdakaustubha*.

The interest of the scientific community for this pre-modern period of Sanskrit production has been growing in recent years, together with the awareness of the cultural and intellectual stakes involved in the tentative refoundation of tradition carried forward by many schools of that time. The chosen author is thus an excellent example of the important role played by a commentarial tradition that is all too often hastily labelled as merely scholastic.

As declared by the series' guidelines, the texts with their translations are preceded by an exhaustive introduction. This offers the reader an explanation of the most important grammatical notions involved in the three texts, a summary of the flow of the discussion (analysed following the traditional way in four steps: linguistic analysis of the *sūtra*, delimitation of the field of application, examples and verification of the validity and necessity of each clause in the rule) and a – most welcome – outline of Bhaṭṭoji's criticisms of the previous views on the matter. This is followed by an excellent translation of the relevant passages, which combines clarity with philological exactitude, and concluded with explicatory notes. The work ends with a glossary of technical terms. Although a certain amount of redundancies and heaviness may be found in the whole organization of the exposition, this is the price to be paid in granting the excellent perspicuity and accessibility of the linguistic arguments and examples involved.

And, in fact, while the authors stop at the first level of exposition and clarification of the material – in strict keeping with their aim of offering some foundational tools – the material they present is full of interesting hints for further research. Among the many possible examples, I should like to draw attention here

to the value of the linguistic data offered by these texts, data which is not only useful for studying the usage of the causative, of course, but also for the much wider debate on traces of ergativity in Old Indo-Arian languages and its evolution in Middle and New ones. Of course, the examples and counter-examples given by the author (a fully accomplished grammarian of his time) are not raw data to be taken at face value, if such as thing as a pure datum exists at all; on the contrary, they are full of implicit theories, and researchers who might not share the same theoretic assumptions must necessarily handle them with care. However, the very fact that they are already interpreted data is also one of their most attractive features. An excellent example of this is given by the two different procedures, illustrated with great acumen by Bhaṭṭoji, through which the act of instigating the action of the object is either withdrawn from an agent (*nivṛttapreṣaṇapakṣa*) or it is imposed on an object (*adhyāropitapreṣaṇapakṣa*). These two procedures (the former consisting of four steps, while the latter has just three) deal with a “transformation” of transitive verbs always supposed to convey two actions, one residing in the subject (e.g. the act of putting a pan on the fire, adding water, etc. residing in Devadatta in “Devadatta cooks rice”) and one residing in the object (i.e. the fact of becoming soft, residing in the rice). Such transitive verbs, given some conditions not discussed here, are liable to pass from active formations such as *devadattaḥ taṇḍulaṃ pacati* “Devadatta cooks rice” to middle causative ones such as *taṇḍulaḥ pācayate* “Rice cooks (gets soft)” which – as Bhaṭṭoji says in the *Prauḍhamanoramā* – emphasizes the ease with which the action is performed, thanks to the shifting of the focus from the agent (as also instigating the activity of the object) to the object, as able to instigate its own part of the action. Between these two extremes, the author identifies one or two intermediate steps such as *taṇḍulaḥ devadattena pācayati* (or *pācayate* following Kaiyaṭa) in the *adhyāropitapreṣaṇa* procedure – with the object taking on the role of agent of its own action (getting soft), while Devadatta simply becomes an instigator – and *taṇḍulaḥ pacyate* followed by *devadattaḥ taṇḍulaṃ pācayati* in the *nivṛttapreṣaṇa* procedure. This is of course not the place to develop the linguistic analysis of these examples (and of their numerous interesting variants), but it does seem undeniable that such a refined analysis of the degrees of agentivity of both subject and object is in itself is a linguistic datum that deserves to be fully investigated.

Let us hope that this series will rapidly become a cradle for further publications, thereby making it easier and more profitable for the whole scholarly community to access commentarial texts, issues and debates.